1-20-92 USA Today

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CAPITAL LINE

USA TODAY'S BRIEFING ON WASHINGTON

Report: Iran paid hostages' captors

Iran paid for the confinement and upkeep of the U.S. hostages in Lebanon and also paid their radical, pro-Iranian captors from $1 million to $2 million for each hostage released, *The Washington Post* reported Sunday. Nearly all key hostage talks were held in Tehran rather than Lebanon, and the hostage-takers were provided with Iranian travel documents and conferred often with Iranian diplomats, the newspaper said. Though Washington has long believed that Tehran exerted influence over the kidnappers, the *Post* quotes an unnamed senior U.S. official as saying "the evidence now is that control was 99.9%."

The last U.S. hostage to return from Lebanon, Terry Anderson, was released Dec. 5. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said Sunday on CBS's *Face the Nation* that it was too soon to talk about restoring normal relations with Iran, but "having the hostage problem resolved opens up possibilities that didn't exist as long as the hostages were being held."

By Tim Dillon, USA TODAY

STOKES: Says files show nothing new

JFK FILES: A consensus is emerging to open sealed congressional files on the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy, but the head of a House panel that probed the murder said the records contain no new evidence. "The files don't contain information that alters publicly disclosed information," said Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio. "Those contending there's something in those records that covers up something will be abysmally disappointed." The pressure to open the files follows release of the movie *JFK*, which suggests that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy. The House Assassination Committee, led by Stokes, concluded in 1979 that Kennedy was the victim of a probable conspiracy that may have involved organized-crime figures. Others publicly supporting release of the files include former president Gerald Ford, a member of the Warren Commission that concluded there was no conspiracy; Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine; and former FBI and CIA director William Webster.